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ABSTRACT

The Alternative Co-operative Education Program (ACE program) of the Peel Board of Education in Ontario, Canada is a program implemented to address the needs of students who were leaving the school system before graduation. The objectives of the ACE program are to provide at-risk students with the opportunity to combine in-school and out-of-school learning experiences while earnng credits towards their secondary school diploma and to encourage the development of a positive attitude towards self, learning, and work. The in-school component of the Career Exploration Course has four main objectives: to know and appreciate oneself; to learn how to relate to others; to develop appropriate educational plans; and to explore career alternatives. The careful matching of students to interested employers is the key to the success of the program. Supervised Alternative Learning for Excused Pupils Life Skills Program (SALEP) is an alternative program for some 14- and 15-year-olds which assists the SALEP students in their transition from school to work. In this program a social worker and teacher work together to address the needs of the students, monitoring students in the morning school sessions and at work, following up on absent students, and making parental contacts. (The appendixes include case studies of ACE students, 1986-1987 statistics on the ACE program, a flowchart demonstrating the process that is followed by students who wish to enter SALEP, a curriculum outline, a form for recording job search contacts, a data sheet for SALEP students, and case studies of SALEP students.) (ABL)

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Transition from School to Employment for the "At Risk" Student: Two Models

S.A.L.E.P. / LIFE SKILLS Program

Alternative Co-operative Education Program

CE 021393

Presented at:

Fourteenth National
Consultation on
Vocational Counselling
January 27, 1988
Ottawa

by:

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The purpose of our presentation is to share with you what The Peel Board of Education is doing to help deal with the "at risk" student in our school system.

Before going further, let us give you some information about The Peel Board of Education. It is located in Southern Ontario. It serves a total school population of 83 000; in the secondary portion there are 31 000 students served by 26 high schools.

The term "at risk" should be defined. From the Agency for Instructional Technology Conference held in June 1987 last year in Chicago, it was found that the following characteristics can typically be assigned to the "at risk" students.

Students "at risk" are those who are:

- one or two years behind grade level in reading and mathematics skills (K-8)
- three or more credits behind age/grade level in credits toward graduation (9-12)
- chronic truants
- school-age parents
- adjudicated delinquents
- victims of personal and/or family, alcohol, or drug abuse
- victims of family trauma such as death, divorce, violence, separation, or unemployment
- victims of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- students with limited English proficiency
- victims of ethnic, economic, or cultural disadvantages

Richard Green, a presenter at the AIT Conference, made these comments as to why the issue of "at risk" students is so significant today. He pointed out that the presence of "at risk" students in Canadian and American schools is by no means a new phenomenon. There have been in the past large numbers of non-English speaking children of poor immigrants; also, there was another large group of "at risk" students during the depression days of the 30's. Green goes on to say that there are factors that make the current situation demand attention. Using the United States as his reference, he says that if the current economic status is to be maintained, 'smart workers' have to be developed so that the U.S. can remain competitive with countries that can produce goods more cheaply. The change in the North American demographics also gives rise for concern. Of particular significance is the fact that in five years, there will be only three people in the work force for each retired person on social security. This is a change from 1950 when there were 17 people in the work force for each retired person.

The moral factor in dealing with the situation is recognized as being equally important. "Historically," says Hornbeck, a Superintendant of Schools in Maryland, "we've had enough kids that we could throw some away". That notion of not being concerned with students who do not succeed either for reasons over which they have no control, or for reasons they control, is not in accord with current American or Canadian ideals. In conclusion, it was stated that ways and means have to be found to improve dramatically the educational attainment of "at risk" students.

The Alternative Co-operative Education Program 'The A.C.E. Program'

In 1982, The Peel Board of Education endorsed the recommendation that an Alternative Co-operative Education Program be implemented to address the needs of students who were leaving the system before graduation. Three target groups were identified: potential S.A.L.E.P. students (under 16 years old), potential school leavers (over 16 years old), and re-entry students (withdrawn from school for one term and returned, or adult). A fourth group was addressed by the program once it was operational: those students who could not benefit from a co-op experience in their own school for a variety of reasons.

The program in 1982 was entirely funded by The Peel Board of Education with items such as salaries, teaching supplies and miscellaneous costs being covered by the Career Orientation Officer's budget. In 1984, The Peel Board of Education submitted a proposal to Employment and Immigration Canada to expand the Alternative Co-operative Education program at a cost of $200,000 over four years. The project subsidizes the cost of two teachers, one of whom works on the program on a regional basis co-ordinating the A.C.E. program and the four teachers involved. The teaching positions are ten-month positions, renewable yearly to a maximum of three years. (The participating students remain on the registers of the referring school.)

The aims and objectives of the A.C.E. program are:

1. to provide "at risk" students with the opportunity to combine in-school and out-of-school learning experiences while earning credits towards their secondary school diploma.

2. to encourage the development of a positive attitude towards self, learning and work.

The in-school component of the Career Exploration Course (Guidance, '84) has four main objectives:

1. to know and appreciate oneself
2. to learn how to relate to others
3. to develop appropriate educational plans
4. to explore career alternatives

Since the Career Exploration Course is offered at a location other than the student's home school, students benefit from the chance to get away from peer influence and the home school which are often perceived by the students and parents to be a negative environment.

The careful matching of students to interested employers is the key to the success of the program. The out-of-school component of the course serves to give on-the-job experience reinforcing what is learned in school about getting and keeping a job.

Students are identified and referred to the A.C.E. program by school administrators, guidance counsellors and social work/attendance counsellors. Application is made to the appropriate A.C.E teacher who interviews the student and parents/guardians to outline the program expectations and answer any questions they may have. A Work Education Agreement is signed at this time for purposes of Workers' Compensation coverage.

There are two options in the A.C.E. program. The most successful of which is a three credit package. The students get one credit for the Career Exploration Course and two credits for the work-related experience. It is sometimes possible to get a fourth subject-related co-op credit. Students can be referred to the A.C.E. program at any time of the year, however, they do not have the opportunity of being involved in the Career Exploration Course due to time constraints. In this option, the co-op experience is tied into a credit that the students already have or are still willing to continue taking. This makes it possible for students to salvage some credits from what might otherwise be a totally unsuccessful year. There are approximately 25 full-day 'in-school' days; the rest of the time is spent at the training station. Students are monitored on-the-job by the employer and the co-op education teacher. A training plan is established at the beginning of the placement and reviewed regularly to make sure students are having a valid learning experience. The success of the program is based on the personal attention the student receives from both concerned teachers and supportive employers.

Students involved in the A.C.E. program are profiled in Appendix A.
The 1986-87 statistics on the A.C.E. are presented in Appendix B.

S.A.L.E.P. - Supervised Alternative Learning for Excused Pupils

The Ontario Ministry of Education introduced The S.A.L.E.P. Program (Regulation 532/83) in recognition of the fact that an educational alternative to the regular school program is required for some 14 and 15 year old students. Prior to this time, 1983, early school leave legislation was in place. The new legislation (Regulation 532-83) urged Boards of Education to consider educational alternatives for S.A.L.E.P. students and emphasized the continued linkage between the student and school.

To provide an educational alternative for these young students, The Peel Board of Education established The S.A.L.E.P. Life Skills Program in September 1986. The purpose of the program is to assist those unemployed S.A.L.E.P. students with their transition from school to work and to facilitate the successful re-entry of these students back into the school system.

This process is achieved with the joint effort of a teacher who delivers the school curriculum and who provides career guidance and by a social worker who assists and counsels all S.A.L.E.P. students.

The flowchart **(Appendix C)** demonstrates the process that is followed by students who wish to obtain Supervised Alternative Learning for Excused Pupils. One of the responsibilities of the school social workers with the Peel Board of Education is encouraging the regular attendance of students under the age of sixteen to attend school. If the student is not benefitting from the regular school program or any other alternative programs such as co-operative education, the school social worker has to inform the parent and student of the S.A.L.E.P. program. At that time, the school social worker interviews the parents, student and school personnel. The social worker then prepares a written assessment which outlines the student's case for being excused from full-time attendance at school. Once this is done, the parents, student and principal attend a S.A.L.E.P. meeting where the school social worker presents an oral report to the S.A.L.E.P. Committee on behalf of the student. Usually, if the student is presently employed he/she is granted permission to continue to work; if the student is not working more than likely the student will be referred to the Life Skills Program. It should be stated here that the Committee could also require that the student remain at school thus, S.A.L.E.P. is denied.

The Life Skills Program has three main objectives, namely:

1. To encourage the development of self-esteem through the heightening of self and group awareness. This is achieved through individual counselling and by working through various exercises designed for the purpose.

2. To assess the individual student's potential for specific occupational areas. Various assessment instruments such as **CHOICES I and II, VIESA, and MESA** are used to develop an individual profile which help in the selection of appropriate occupations for the student.

3. To develop employability skills so that the student is better prepared to enter the work force. Emphasis is placed on the development of a suitable work attitude; also job preparation exercises such as the completion of an application form, the development of a resume, and interview skills are stressed. This will assist the student in obtaining and retaining employment.

To help achieve these objectives, the curriculum as outlined in **Appendix D** is followed. Although it may appear rigid in print, there is a high degree of flexibility for various reasons.

1. Students enter the program on a continuous intake basis, thus changes are made to facilitate group interaction.

2. Exercises are used to meet the individual needs of the students.

3. Students in the program function within a wide range of ability.

For the most part, students attend morning sessions at The Life Skills Centre for approximately 20 days. During the afternoons the student is expected to practise his/her job search skills and keep a record of the job search undertaken (**Appendix E**). Some students use this time to work on correspondence courses developed by the Ministry of Education.

The students are monitored at work by both The Life Skills teacher and the social worker who together staff the program. If both attendance and performance of the student at The Life Skills Centre and at work are satisfactory, it will be recommended that the student receive appropriate credits based on the Personal Life Management Guideline, 1985.

Our program is unique in that there is both a social worker and a teacher working together as a team to address the needs of the students. Both people play an active role in working with the students in the morning, monitoring students at work, following up on absentee students and making parental contacts.

Results of the 1986/87 S.A.L.E.P./Life Skills Program

The S.A.L.E.P./Life Skills Program Data Sheet (Appendix F) gives an overview of The Life Skills clientele. Of the one hundred S.A.L.E.P. applications processed, forty-four students were referred to The Life Skills Centre with all but one attending. The majority of the students referred came from schools in Mississauga. This is probably because of the closer proximity for Mississauga students as well as the larger student population in this community.

There was an almost even split in those students coming from vocational and regular schools; two of the students were referred by elementary schools. The majority of students were fifteen years of age upon entering the program.

Although Appendix F states that one half of the students were working as of June 20th, most students who entered the program worked at a full-time job for at least part of their time in The Life Skills Program. By far, the largest percentage of students who found work were successful in maintaining their first job. In situations where students had more than one job, it was primarily because the student was dissatisfied with the position, rather than the employer being dissatisfied with the student as an employee.

At the beginning of the second semester, four students returned to full-time attendance at school; two of these students were successful in obtaining credits. Also, during the school year, fourteen of the students turned sixteen and therefore were no longer the direct responsibility of The Life Skills Centre.

Of the forty-four students referred to the Centre, twenty-eight were recommended to receive full or partial credits through the Personal Life Management Guideline, 1985. Several students also attempted to earn additional credits by taking correspondence courses through The Ministry of Education Independent Learning Centre. One student who was working on three different courses remained at the Centre past her sixteenth birthday to take advantage of the assistance offered by The Life Skills Centre staff. Another student received a full credit for a grade nine math course (mark 85%) and may soon receive another credit.

Three students involved in the S.A.L.E.P./Life Skills Program are profiled in Appendix G.

References

Green, Richard R., A Closer Look at the Student 'At Risk'. Proceedings of the Conference on Technology and Students At Risk of School Failure, Agency for Instructional Technology, Bloomington, Indiana. 1987

Hornbeck, David W., Technology and Students 'At Risk'. Proceedings of the Conference on Technology and Students At Risk of School Failure, Agency for Instructional Technology, Bloomington, Indiana. 1987

Appendix A

Case Studies

Profile: A.C.E. Students

STUDENT A

Steve was referred to the A.C.E. program when he was 16 and in grade 10. He was disruptive in class when bored or frustrated and had sporadic achievement in school courses. He wanted to be an auto mechanic and was sent for an interview in June to a large garage. On the basis of that interview Steve was given a full-time summer job. Steve did a very good job at his Co-operative Education placement the following year. Although he has only 19 credits he has decided to leave school and pursue an auto mechanic apprenticeship with his co-op employer.

STUDENT B

Betty was enrolled in a school that did not have a Career Exploration Course component to the co-op program. She was an advanced student who was having no difficulties academically. Betty was involved in extra curricular activities and was well regarded by peers and teachers alike. Her goal was to finish grade 12 and get a job to make some money. Betty's father wanted her to go to university. A co-op placement was arranged at a large company and Betty's training was planned so she would rotate through the various departments. Betty started out in reception, moved through switchboard, accounts receivable, payroll, personnel and ended up in the sales area. She had an opportunity to go 'on the road' with a sales representative for a few days to see what the job entailed. In the process, Betty learned that all sales representatives with this company have MBA's. The long and short of this is that Betty went back to grade 13 and plans to take a business degree at Ryerson.

STUDENT C

Lynn was an adult Alternative Co-operative Education student. She is a single parent with three children. Lynn took the initiative to start her own business in silk flowers and plants while at home with her family. Lynn had been out of school for 15 years when she enrolled in art and drafting courses at a secondary school in September, 1986.

Because of her aspirations of becoming an interior decorator, and the advantages of on-the-job training, Lynn participated in the co-operative education program. Her placement was at an Interior Design shop in Mississauga. Lynn was a busy lady because she also worked part time at a boutique in Port Credit.

Lynn did an outstanding job at her training station. Her training supervisor found her to be an extremely enthusiastic, capable, and co-operative employee. Her positive attitude and congenial nature made her the ideal person to work with.

Lynn now attends Sheridan College's Interior Design Program.

STUDENT D

Sheila was 14 in grade 9 when she was referred to A.C.E. program in May. She was experiencing a great deal of difficulty getting along with her step-father to the detriment of her school work. It was hoped that two credits could be salvaged if Sheila would continue in an English course in school and participate in a training station placement at a retail outlet. Sheila did an excellent job until the end of the school term and was hired for the summer. She planned to continue in the A.C.E. program in the fall taking the Career Exploration Course. The student decided that she was interested in pursuing a career in hairdressing. She was interviewed and accepted in June at a hair salon for her new Co-op placement in the following fall.

In September when the student arrived for class she had drastically changed her demeanor and was unrecognizable to the employee who hired her in June. This placement lasted only six days. Another placement in a hair salon was established with modest success. It became apparent to the employer, co-op teacher, monitor and eventually the student, that hairdressing was no longer the desired career choice and another placement was required.

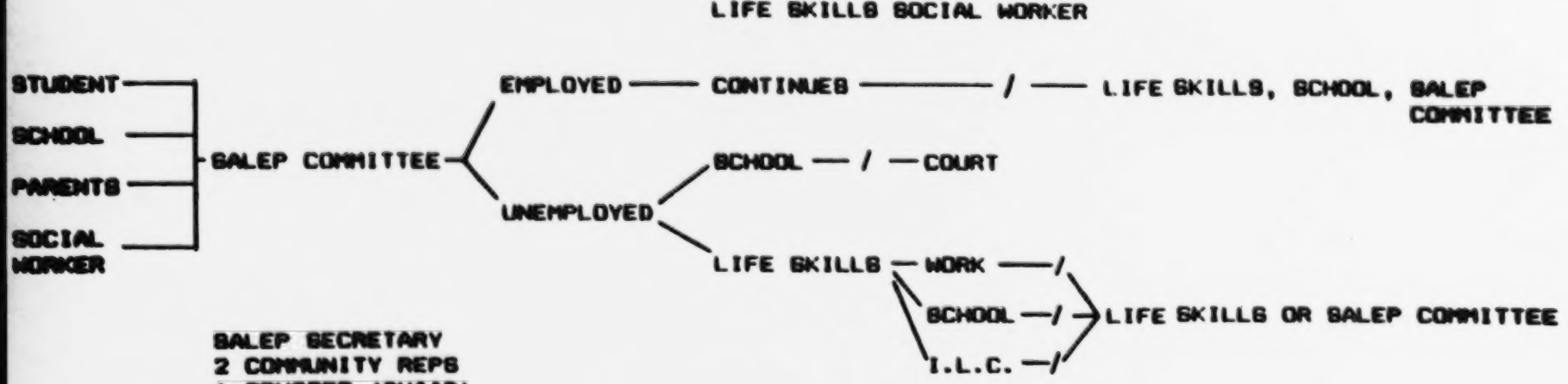
The final placement for Sheila was in animal care and turned out to be very successful. Sheila returned to school-full time the following semester with a positive attitude and the realization that school was very important in order to achieve her future goals.

ALTERNATIVE CAREER CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION

1986-87

	Students Referred Program	Students Accepting Program	Students Starting Program	Students Completing Program
Potential S.A.L.E.P. 14 - 15	29	24	15	11
Potential School Leavers 16+	186	168	132	104
Re-Entry Students	15	14	12	10
Total	230	206	163	125

SUPERVISED ALTERNATIVE LEARNING FOR EXCUSED PUPILS
(PROBABLE PROCESS FOR S.A.L.E.P. CANDIDATES)



SALEP SECRETARY
2 COMMUNITY REPS
1 TRUSTEE (CHAIR)
SUPERINTENDENT
LIFE SKILLS REP

LIFE SKILLS TEACHER/COUNSELLOR
LIFE SKILLS SOCIAL WORKER

V.P./COUNSELLOR
STUDENT AND PARENT(S)

Appendix D

S.A.L.E.P. LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM

COURSE OUTLINE

DAY 1	Orientation - Why are you here? - Student's expectations - Life Skills expectations Best Friend Introduction Reading: Facing the New and Scary	
DAY 2	What is a Job? #18 Job Awareness Quiz D1.1, D1.2 Job Search Skills - VIESA assessment - What will it be like to look for a job? #19 - Application forms #53	VC Where Do Jobs Come From
DAYS 3-4	Application forms cont'd. Pocket Resume Job Leads #31-32 How to use the Yellow Pages #34, #35, #39 Other Sources of jobs #63	
DAY 5	Self Awareness - Getting To Know Yourself - Personal Inventory A1.5 - CHOICES I - Confidence Building	
DAY 6	Job Satisfaction D7.1, D1.3 Labour Market #8, #9, #13, #17	VC Future Jobs
DAY 7	Visit to CEC or YES, or speaker - Jobs Are... D1.8, #9, #13	VC Good Work #6 VC World Without Work(426)
DAY 8	Self Awareness #17 - Interest Profile #48 - Check list of Abilities D9.1	
DAY 9-10	Interview Skills - #17, #18 - Dear Kid - First Impressions #69 - Dress #70 - Questions #71-72 - Body Language (reading)	VC Get A Job (Cir 9223) Film #3348
DAY 11	Mock Interviews	VC Credentials (Cir 9123)

DAY 12	Resume preparation	
DAY 13	First Day on the Job #79 Maintaining the Job #80	VC Good Work #5 Film #3349
DAY 14-15	Decision Making/Goal Setting - Where are you going - Career Decision Making	VC Personal Decision Making VC Alternate Routes VC You Choose VC Career Planning
DAY 16-19	Intensive Job Search Optional Units Social Relationships and Personal Awareness - Peer Pressure - Relationships with family - Personal Hygiene - Birth control	VC Journey Through Stress VC I Know a Secret VC No Road Back VC Face to Face (1459)
	Money Management - paying room and board - setting up a bank account - supporting oneself	VC Branch Banking VC Money at Work VC So You Want to Buy a Car? VC 1449
	Retail Service - customer relations	VC Customer Service (Cir 9265) VC Kettle Creek Canvas Co. (1460)
	Office Skills - keyboarding basics - word processing basics - telephone etiquette - setting priorities	VC Open Sesame (1458) VC Talk Business (1458) VC It's About Time (1459)
	Young Offenders - visit from the Youth Bureau	Film All the Years (5747) VC Understanding Adolescence (Cir 9066)
DAY 20	Final Day - confirmation of job placement, monitoring process, forms signed, etc. - schedule for correspondence for those taking ILC courses	

Appendix E

TRUSTEES
Margaret McKee
(Chairman)
L. Cliff Gyles
(Vice-Chairman)
Judee Beer
George Carson
Karen Carstensen
Beryl Ford
Gail Green
Dr. Raion Greene
Gary Heighington
William Kent
Pierre Klein
Robert Lagerquist
Thomas McAuliffe
Carolyn Parrish
Rum Thomason
George Watt

Director of Education
and Secretary
J.A. Fraser, B.A., M.Ed.

Associate Director
of Education
R.N. Charmers, B.A., M.Ed.

Associate Director of
Education/Business
and Treasurer
M.D. Roy, C.A.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

In accordance with the Education Act, 1985, Regulation 532/83, Supervised Alternative Learning for Excused Pupils (S.A.L.E.P.), _____ has been granted permission by the S.A.L.E.P. Committee to attend the Life Skills Program. As part of the Life Skills Program, the student is to gain practical experience in job search skills.

Would you kindly indicate, by signing the back of this form, that this student has approached you with reference to seeking employment.

Should you require any further information, please contact the undersigned at 848-8382.

Yours sincerely,

Cec Patriquin,
Life Skills Teacher.

/sm

H.J.A. Brown Education Centre
5650 Hurontario Street
Mississauga, Ontario L5R 1C6
(416) 890-1099

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Appendix F

S.A.L.E.P/LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM DATA SHEET - 1986-87

Referrals to Centre

Number of students referred	44
Number of students who attended	43
Number of students entered under special circumstances	1 (Non-S.A.L.E.P)
Number of students from Caledon	1
Number of students from Brampton	14
Number of students from Mississauga	29
Number of students from Vocational S.S.	21
Number of students from Regular S.S.	22
Number of students from Elementary School	2

Age of Student

Age upon entry - 14 years	9
Age upon entry - 15 years	36

Situation of students as of June 20, 1987

Number of students who returned to school	4
Number of students working	22
Number of students looking for work	3
Number of students who turned age 16	14
Other	2

Credits

Number of S.S. credits granted	28 1/3
Number of students receiving S.S. credits	28

Appendix G

PROFILE OF THREE S.A.L.E.P./LIFE SKILLS STUDENTS

STUDENT A

Student A is a vocational student who has not earned any secondary school credits. He comes from a family where other siblings were associated with the social workers of The Peel Board of Education. In the beginning, student A attended the Life Skills Centre on a sporadic basis. Eventually, student A was able to attend the Centre on a consistent basis because of the flexibility of the program and because of the individual attention that was given to this student. Student A's chances of obtaining full-time employment seemed unlikely at the beginning because of his personal appearance - wearing blue jeans, having long hair and being small in size. His job search initially proved fruitless. After some counselling however, the student decided to get his hair trimmed and wear more appropriate clothes in order to obtain employment. Finally, he was able to get an interview for a position in a factory. The employer phoned the Centre for a reference and the student obtained this position. This job was initially on a temporary basis but when the position was terminated, student A was relocated in another area of the plant. Recently, student A has been hired on a permanent basis. He is doing very well at work and it is unlikely that he will return to school in September, 1987.

September '87 update.

This student is still employed at the same company.

STUDENT B

Student B comes from a single parent family. He had registered in a vocational school in September, 1985, and again in September, 1986, but had attended school for only 12 days. This student, who was very withdrawn because of his low self-esteem, managed to attend the centre on a regular basis between the months of January and June. During this time, he worked on and obtained a MAT 1B correspondence credit with an average of over 85%. He also started the GCA 1B course and is progressing well.

At the beginning of June, the student seemed to be losing some interest in attending the Life Skills Centre so a full-time position in shipping and receiving was found for him. He got off to a rough start because of illness; however, the employer was willing to keep him on because he proved to be a good worker.

This student turned sixteen at the end of June; it is uncertain at this time if he will return to school in September.

September '87 update.

This student came to the Life Skills Centre asking for assistance in continuing with correspondence courses. He has also, with his consent, been referred to the Futures program.

STUDENT C

Student C is in her first year of secondary school. Although the student had to travel by two public transit buses for over forty-five minutes to get to the Centre, her attendance was excellent. Her good attendance pattern is attributed in part to the formation of friendships at the Centre - a common occurrence - as well as the urging of her parents. The positive reinforcement this student received at the Centre helped to improve her self-esteem. After filling out what she considered countless numbers of application forms and receiving only a couple of interviews, a factory job was found. The student enjoyed this position and performed very well according to her employer.

Student C's life went out of control when she met a man from a midway. She stopped going to work; she left home; she had the police after her as a runaway. Her plans to follow the midway came to an abrupt end when she was physically assaulted.

With the combined support of a community social worker, the Life Skills staff and her parents, the student has returned home. Her parents were most appreciative of the support offered by the Life Skills Centre to have her return to the Centre and assist her in seeking full-time employment.

September '87 update

The student worked part-time during the summer. She is unwilling to return to school full-time. She is presently working with the Life Skills staff to obtain full-time employment.